

Dear All,
FYI – release issued this morning on behalf of local NHS:

PRESS RELEASE
12th October, 2009.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU GET FLU!

NEVER underestimate flu — whether swine flu or seasonal flu - that’s the message from local health chiefs as the colder weather starts to bite.

The directors of public health for NHS North Staffordshire and NHS Stoke on Trent are reminding everyone - especially the over-65s and those with long-term illness - they are more at risk of suffering bronchitis and pneumonia if they catch flu.

Dr Judith Bell, Director of Public Health for NHS North Staffordshire, said: “Flu can be a serious illness for anyone but can be especially serious for people as they get older and if they have long-term conditions such as asthma.

“If you had a seasonal flu jab last year, you will need a new jab this winter, because the virus changes every year and the vaccine needs to match the latest version.”

Talk to your local GP, nurse or pharmacist to find out more or visit the NHS Choices website at www.nhs.uk/conditions/Flu-jab/Pages/Introduction.aspx.

Dr Bell added: “It’s also important that carers look after their health, too. Health professionals who have contact with patients should have their jab so they can try to keep themselves and others as safe and healthy as possible. “

Turning to the current pandemic flu, Dr Giri Rajaratnam, of NHS Stoke-on-Trent, reminded people that, far from going away, swine flu is now in the expected second wave. What’s more, it has the potential for affecting many times the number of people who contracted the virus over the summer months.

“The basic messages about swine flu are more important than ever before – if you feel you have a flu-like illness, first check your symptoms by calling the National Pandemic Flu Service phoneline - 0800 1 513 100 – or by visiting the website www.direct.gov.uk/pandemicflu

“You can also call the Swine Flu information line on 0800 1513 513 to hear the latest advice.

“In most cases swine flu is a mild illness and the best thing that people can do is to rest at home and drink plenty of fluids. Anti-virals are only necessary in some cases.”

If people have taken these steps and are still concerned they should call NHS Direct on 0845 46 47. Please don't visit A&E."

There are also simple steps people can use to stop the spread of any flu. Always use a tissue to catch sneezes and throw away used tissues, where germs can linger, and wash hands frequently.

Typical symptoms of swine flu include a temperature of 38 degrees Celsius or greater, sudden cough and may also include a headache, tiredness, chills, aching muscles, limb or joint pain, upset stomach, sore throat, runny nose, sneezing or loss of appetite.

Dr Rajaratnam added that while the vaccination programme for swine flu is expected to start in the next few weeks, it is important that people who can benefit from the seasonal flu vaccine should be immunised now and not wait to have the two jabs together.

ENDS.